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CORRESPONDENCE

BETWEEN THE

REV. ROBERT WELLS, M.A.

CHAPLAIN TO THE EARL OF DUNMORE,

AND

A GENTLEMAN

UNDER THE SIGNATURE OF

PUBLICOLA,

RELATIVE TO

THE RIOTS AT BIRMINGHAM,

AND THE

COMMEMORATION

OF

THE FRENCH REVOLUTION.

PRINTED FOR J. JOHNSON, ST. PAUL'S CHURCH-YARD,  
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Price SIX-PENCE.

CORRESPONDENCE

WITH THE

REV. ROBERT WILKINS M.A.

CHAPLAIN TO THE ARCHBISHOP OF CANTERBURY

AND

A GENERAL MAN

OF THE REVOLUTION



THE REVOLUTION

OF THE REVOLUTION

OF THE REVOLUTION

OF THE REVOLUTION

OF THE REVOLUTION

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ADVERTISEMENT.

**T**HESE Letters appeared in the BATH  
CHRONICLE soon after the distressing  
events at Birmingham. As the subject of them  
is of a publick and interesting nature, it has been  
thought adviseable to collect and reprint them  
in the present shape.

Sept. 1791.



# ADVERTISMENT

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## CORRESPONDENCE, &c.

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TO THE PRINTER

OF

THE BATH CHRONICLE.

*July 23, 1791.*

**F**ROM the dreadful disturbances that have happened in Birmingham and its neighbourhood, I cannot help being led into reflections on the propriety and impropriety of Revolution Clubs, the principles of which I cannot but look on as of most dangerous consequences. I will not call in question the characters of the leading members of those clubs, as many of them are men of most enlightened understandings, and benevolent hearts,—but I would only wish them to consider the danger they are incurring, by poisoning the minds, and rousing the imaginations of common people, not capable

of judging for themselves, or determining the position in ethics, where liberty ends, and licentiousness begins; for whether the cause be good or bad,

..... *Spargere voces*

*In vulgum ambiguas,*

is pregnant with such evil, as every sober-minded man of both parties must deprecate. And let me ask these Gentlemen, What Englishmen have to do with the affairs of France? Don't we all profess ourselves happy in our excellent monarch and establishment, and therefore why make such ado? or why take such pains to disseminate principles hostile to both?—principles that have made the French empire a mass of confusion, and a monument of human misery; and which can be justified on no grounds, either of morality or true patriotism. The stripping their Monarch of his inherent rights without a fault, the Nobility of their rank and estates, the Clergy of their freeholds, are actions of such immoral and dangerous tendency, that I should think no men in their senses would attempt to justify, much less immortalize; or if they deserve *immortality*, it should be an immortality of *infamy*.

I am a Churchman, Mr. Printer, and a man, a strong advocate for monarchy, and of warm attachment to our religious establishment; but neither my partiality for the one, or attachment for the other, shall

shall ever induce me to justify any excesses or intemperance in any party, be my conviction of the justness of the cause what it may. I disclaim blind and enthusiastic instruments, *means* so inadequate to the *ends*: for I bless God, that our Church and Monarchy are founded upon a rock, against which neither the gates of hell, or 'the hell of *republicanism*,' (to retort Mr. Paine's expression) shall not prevail; or if the dreadful moment should ever arrive, when they should attempt and prevail, I trust they will be defended on such a system, and on such principles, as, in the strong and energetick language of Scripture, will enable "one man to chase a thousand, and a thousand to put ten thousand to flight." But, '*felices quos faciunt aliena pericula cautos*;' which sentiment I hope will have such effect on all *parties*, as to prevent this crisis ever happening.

In the mean time I would recommend to these patriotick gentlemen, to be a little more on their guard in future; or if they must commemorate, to commemorate in private, and confine their principles and sentiments to the *bottle*, and under *the rose*, by which means they will save their bottles and glasses, if not something more.

ROBERT WELLS, A. M.

Chaplain to the Earl of Dunmore.

TO



TO THE PRINTER OF THE  
BATH CHRONICLE.

**I**N your paper of last Thursday, I read a very extraordinary letter signed "ROBERT WELLS, "A. M. Chaplain to the Earl of Dunmore." Before I reply to the arguments used by this gentleman, I must take the liberty to suggest, that he is not the most grammatical writer, nor always consistent with himself. "I bless God," says he, "that our Church and Monarchy are founded on a rock, against which neither the gates of hell, or the hell of republicanism, (to retort Mr. Paine's expression) shall not prevail: or if the dreadful moment should ever arrive when they should attempt and prevail, I trust they will be defended on such a system," &c. Probably the beginning of the sentence would have been more agreeable to orthography, if it had run thus, "against which neither the gates of hell, nor the hell of republicanism &c. *shall prevail.*† I must likewise observe that the relative *they*, in the phrase "I trust they will be defended," has for its antecedent the preceding *they*; which term refers to the gates of hell; so that the strict construction has a meaning different from the author's intention, "or if the dreadful

† "Mr. Wells has by letter pointed out this grammatical inaccuracy."

*Note by the Printer,*

“ dreadful moment should ever arrive when they”  
 (the gates of hell, and the hell of republicanism)  
 “ should attempt and prevail, I trust that they”  
 (the gates of hell, &c.) “ shall be defended” (and  
 that too after they have prevailed) “ on such a sys-  
 tem as that one man shall chase a thousand,” &c.

The same passage is likewise a proof of the latter part of my assertion, that this writer is not only ungrammatical, but sometimes inconsistent with himself. If God is to be blessed, that the Church and Monarchy are founded upon a rock, against which neither the gates of hell, nor the hell of republicanism, shall prevail, how can he afterwards add—  
 “ or if the dreadful moment should ever arrive,  
 “ when the gates of hell &c. should attempt and  
 “ prevail?” He presumes the Church of England to be the Church of Christ, which is to stand all assaults, and yet supposes that it may possibly be overthrown; that its enemies shall not prevail against it, and yet may prevail against it. But why must Monarchy be joined with the Church of Christ, and regarded as an impregnable fortress? One would naturally conclude that such a prediction had come from the mouth of Christ; but this is sufficiently disproved by events. Experience testifies, that some Monarchies were founded not upon a rock, but in the sand.

But

But to come to a closer engagement. This writer sets out with saying, "that the late dreadful disturbances at Birmingham led him to make reflections on the impropriety of Revolution clubs; this implies, that these clubs were the cause of the disturbances. The Gentlemen had a right to meet on this occasion, so that they conducted themselves peaceably. If a lawful action be made a pretence for unlawful proceedings, is the guilt imputable to the former? Had the contemplation of these riots led Mr. Wells to condemn the indiscreet virulence of some of the members of the Church of England in the higher classes, by whose uncharitable language the mob has been enflamed, the transition would have been natural.

Still considering the Revolution Societies as the cause, Mr. Wells proceeds to exhort them to take warning by what has happened, not "to poison the minds, and rouse the imaginations of the common people, incapable of judging for themselves." How ill suited is this advice to these Societies! They have published no combustible hand-bills, though their enemies would wish to make the world believe it; their whole conduct has been peaceable, and affords the best answer to all invectives against them. The counsel would have been better adapted, if the members of the Established Church, who  
have



have been so imprudent (for I will not impute to them the wickedness of design) to use expressions which have misled the populace, were exhorted to be more cautious in their language, lest, by the absurd cry, that *the Church is in danger*, fresh excesses should be occasioned. And the Latin quotation, *felices quos faciunt aliena pericula cautos*, would have been better addressed to the common people, than to the gentlemen of these Societies. Many of the lower ranks have already perished in the ruins of the houses which they were in the act of destroying; more must fall by the hands of the executioner. Let such examples terrify others from listening to the intemperate language of some Churchmen, who ought to know better, and to whom I wish no greater evil than an increase of charity.

It is also laid to the charge of the Revolution Societies, that they "propagate principles hostile to our Church and Monarchy, principles which have made the French empire a mass of confusion, and a monument of human misery." How singularly unhappy is this author, that his statement should not only be untrue, but the very reverse of truth! What was the situation of France previous to the Revolution? Her finances were in the most deranged and exhausted condition; the Nobility were in possession of the principal property, but  
paid

paid no taxes, whilst the weight of them fell on the industrious poor; the Dignitaries of the Church were opulent, luxurious, and idle, whilst all sacerdotal duty was performed by the inferior clergy, who had scarcely a maintenance. Add to the outlines of this horrid picture, state prisons; where the suspected were never confronted by their accusers, but prejudged and doomed to languish a hopeless life in the gloom of a dungeon.

Such was the *happiness* of the old government. The *miseries* experienced under the new, raised by the labours of the National Assembly, are seen in the repeated addresses from every part of the kingdom: the new constitution giving satisfaction to all but a few Aristocrats, who are desirous of prevailing on some foreign Court to assist them in extinguishing a spirit of liberty, which cannot but be displeasing to all tyrants. Twenty-six millions of people have exchanged oppression and misery for freedom and happiness. Where is the criminality of meeting to commemorate so distinguished an æra? How does the celebration of such a festival disseminate principles hostile to our Monarchy and Church? The utmost that can be said is this: There are a *few* Englishmen who rejoice in the downfall of despotism, and who, in the *circumstances* of France, approve a revolution.—Does this imply, that they wish the  
English

English to imitate the example of Frenchmen; that they wish a general insurrection of the people, to overthrow the British Monarchy and its established religion? Until England is precisely in the same situation as France was, these gentlemen cannot be accused of a desire that there should be a resumption of power into the hands of the people. The fears which have been raised against the societies for commemorating the 14th of July, could only be inspired by a false belief that the government of England is but a copy of the old government of France. But the members of these societies think not so badly of their country; they rejoice in the portion of freedom which they possess; and, although they are sensible of some grievances which call loudly for a reform, they would not purchase it at the expence of the publick tranquillity. Besides, the French have made no attempts to subvert the Church, and have confirmed the Monarchy by an almost unanimous vote; they have only proved themselves enemies to excessive power in the one, and excessive wealth in the other. How then can their English admirers be charged with disseminating republican principles, or shewing an aversion to religious establishments?

This author further proceeds to say, that "their stripping their Monarch of his inherent rights, without a fault; the Nobility of their rank and estates;



“ and the Clergy of their freeholds; are actions of  
 “ such immoral and dangerous tendency, that *no*  
 “ *men in their senses would attempt to justify.*” It is  
 highly probable, that the members of these Socie-  
 ties, without fear of being suspected of loss of sense,  
 may deny the doctrine of the *inherent* rights of Kings;  
 and perhaps they may think that the living of a  
 clergyman, if he fulfils not the duties of the ministry,  
 ought to be forfeited, and therefore ought not to  
 be considered as a freehold. What they think of  
 the extinction of titles, or many other parts of the  
 French system, I know not; but be this as it may,  
 it is to be remembered, that by commemorating  
 the Revolution in France, gentlemen mean not to  
 give their approbation in detail of what has been  
 done; they do but express their joy in a Revolu-  
 tion, which has destroyed ancient abuses, and se-  
 cured to each individual the enjoyment of his rights.

I have never yet, Sir, attended one of these ob-  
 noxious meetings on the 14th of July; but enter-  
 taining the sentiments which I have here avowed,  
 I may, perhaps, at some future period give myself  
 that pleasure. Whatever consequences follow, I  
 cannot say that I have had no caution; for the  
 Chaplain of the Earl of Dunmore has bad me  
 beware, in most elegant terms, that *I might save*  
*not only the bottles and glassess, but something more.*

July 30, 1791.

PUBLICOLA.

## TO THE PRINTER OF THE

## BATH CHRONICLE.

**I** FIND myself called on by a Gentleman, who signs himself "PUBLICOLA," in your last paper, to clear myself and sentiments, from the imputation of grammatical error and obscurity.

The first charge, Sir, you have invalidated in a note, and which likewise is done away by the state the letter appears in in another publick paper, where no such inaccuracy is to be found; but whether the error laid in the press, or my oversight, is now of little moment, as it was rectified before I read this writer's reply, or knew that a reply was intended. The drift and meaning, however, of the letter was clear and obvious, viz. "That I blessed God that our Church and Monarchy were so firmly settled, as to bid defiance to all attempts against them; that if an attempt should be made to prevail *against them*, that they would be defended on such systems and principles as, under God, would insure success; and that the sentiments of those societies (stiled Revolution Clubs) were chiefly to be dreaded, as tending towards inflaming and disturbing the minds of a description of people, incapable, in many cases, of judging for themselves, and

of

of course liable to be carried into excesses as would terminate in their ruin."

But it is easy for party rancour to misconstrue, and prejudice pervert, which has been the case in more instances than mine. But (however extraordinary the sentiments appear to this writer) I am of the same opinion still; and am more than ever convinced, that had there been no attempts made at B——m to commemorate, by the dispersion of a hand-bill, there would have been no disturbance, —a presumptive, if not positive proof of the sense in which such a commemoration was taken; and I am clear, moreover, that the sentiments which have been published in our newspapers, as the sentiments of these Societies, can leave no doubt, as to their tendency, on the mind of any unprejudiced man in the three kingdoms. That they have been conducted hitherto with decorum, is granted; but may not this decorum arise from the natural timidity with which novel systems are propagated; a diffidence of the state of the publick mind to embrace them; the success attending them in the other kingdom; as well as the general good disposition of these gentlemen towards *Monarchy*?

But (says this writer) why join Church and Monarchy together? Though the *union* may not please him, my reasons for it are justifiable, viz. they  
are



are parts of one and the same fabrick, the constitution in Church and State. The Monarchy, the British Monarchy; the Church, the Established Church; (which from its purity I believe to be the Church of CHRIST) the Rock, the purity of the one, and the excellency of the other: And I will aver too, and I am sanctioned in my opinion by the law of nations, that not only this or that Monarchy, but every Monarchy that has antiquity and received custom for its establishment, (provided there be no stretch or violation of the prerogative alledged against the Monarch) is built not on "sand," but such a foundation, that nothing but the utmost state of mental depravity should attempt to overthrow,---depravity, Mr. Printer, nothing short of that which instigates *one* man to *seize* the property of *another*!

But this figurative expression of "sand," though introduced by this writer with caution, and the distinction of the word "some," gives me too some insight into his political tendency; and leads me to account for that part of his letter where he combats my expression of inherent right, though he does this too through the medium of "certain Gentlemen of these Societies." But some part of the publick will agree with me, perhaps, that neither he nor they are safe persons to be intrusted with the decision of right, and especially as the connection of

all rights (whether inherent or hereditary) is so closely drawn, that a "transition" from doubting the one to the other may be equally as *easy*, if not more "natural," than what he recommends to *me* on the subject of the Birmingham riots.

I shall touch but little on that part of his letter where he hints the sentiments of these gentlemen, and his own, about opulent dignitaries, and the forfeiture of Clergymen's livings, except congratulating the Established Clergy, that they are in *better* hands, under a good and just government, where neither the riches of the Church need dread the hand of *rapacity*, and where (if omissions are committed) they may receive a *milder* sentence than what this gentleman and his friends are inclined to bestow.

The picture that this writer presents of the blessed effects of a certain great national event, comes next to be considered, which I shall contrast with one of my own; and as we both, I presume, get our colours from the same source of information, mine may be considered as entitled to the same justness in point of colouring as his own; therefore, that I am not confuted on that head, nor so *unhappy*, as he is pleased to describe me to be in my representations. We have heard of a 'King' (lately) a prisoner in his own government, his Nobility stript  
of

of their titles and estates. We have heard of that solemn barrier, the law of the land, thrown down; of subordination destroyed; military discipline subverted, oaths made *nothing* of; and to compleat the climax, excesses committed, that the utmost pitch of despotism never witnessed. We have heard of all this faithfully detailed in our newspapers; and, if to repeat scenes of horror be unpleasant, this writer drives me to it; to whom I can truly say, in the words of a celebrated poet, *Infandos--jubes renovare dolores.*

That a publick body, to whom the prints ascribe these actions, may have received addresses, and from numbers, shall not be denied. But of what description of people do these numbers consist?—the greatest part probably of those, whom a revolution may change for the better, and not for the worse; and a revolution that alters the order of things, that knocks down those distinctions in society, which however proper, are often unpleasing to the *canaille*, cannot be supposed to want numbers to give it sanction, and (as among numbers there must be some men of genius) neither can it want the aid of plausibility. But (says this writer) the Assembly have restored Monarchy; true, but they were *compelled* to it to save their own *existence*. They stript the King of his regal powers, and what has once



happened may again; however (if it can be called Monarchy) it is the only instance of one that approaches to this writer's idea of *Monarchy in the sand*, that I can think of.

In short, Mr. Printer, I cannot allow this able writer his approbation of these proceedings in "detail," because the first principles on which these proceedings are grounded, being bad and unprecedented, must, like the false premises of a syllogism, ever affect the conclusions.

R. W.

Aug. 8th, 1791.



TO THE PRINTER OF THE  
BATH CHRONICLE.

AUG. 15th, 1791.

IF the letter in your paper of the 11th instant had not been subscribed "R. W." I should have discovered it to be the production of Mr. ROBERT WELLS, M. A. Chaplain to the Earl of Dunmore. It is written with the same accuracy and elegance of diction, as the former signed with his name. Permit me to produce a few instances: "Whether the error *laid* in the press," &c.—"Provided there be no stretch or *violation* of the prerogative alledged against the Monarch." If the Commons were to exercise a power lodged in the Crown, they would be said to have violated the King's prerogative; but to accuse a King of violating his own prerogative, is the strangest expression I have ever heard. "But of what description of people do those numbers" (the numbers of which these societies are composed) "consist?—the greatest part probably of *those whom* a revolution may change for the better." Mr. Wells, no doubt, means, who expect to improve their situation or circumstances by the revolution; but the words import, that the members of these societies are *themselves* to be

changed for the better by a revolution.—But why (it may be said) do I trouble myself in pointing out these trivial defects, when the meaning of these passages is evidently discoverable? I answer, Mr. Wells, a Master of Arts, and Chaplain to the Earl of Dunmore, avows himself the author of these letters, which he assuredly would not have done, if he had regarded them as defective in correctness. On this account, their literary merit is no improper object of discussion.

Mr. Wells, in his reply, makes a heavy charge against me; he accuses me of “having misconstrued or perverted his meaning, through party rancour or prejudice.” I cannot conceive what should induce him to adopt that sentiment. When I pointed out the inaccuracy of his language, I remarked, that a strict interpretation would convey a meaning different from the author’s intention; thus, whilst I attacked the loose mode of expression, I made no use of it for the purpose of misrepresentation. I wish Mr. Wells had been equally cautious: He says, “I cannot allow this writer his approbation of these proceedings in detail.” If he will consult my letter, he will perceive, that I have expressly said the gentlemen of these societies mean *not* to give their approbation in detail: he will not surely infer from hence, that I approve the proceedings



ceedings in detail. As to the imputation of party rancour or prejudice, Mr. Wells (to whom I am entirely unknown) cannot but be ignorant whether I am infected by the one, or under the dominion of the other. When resort is had to such language, it betrays the weakness of a cause ; it marks an inability to oppose by argument, and is nought but the ebullition of impotent rage.

In pursuing the examination of Mr. Wells's last letter, I propose to offer some comments.

1<sup>st</sup>. Upon his abuse against the Revolution Societies.

2<sup>dly</sup>. Upon his abuse against the National Assembly of France.

3<sup>dly</sup>. Upon his doctrine of the inherent right of Kings.

Mr. Wells adheres to his opinion, that the Revolution Clubs are answerable for the disturbances at Birmingham. Let me put a question or two to Mr. Wells. Suppose a number of Clergymen, and Members of the Establishment, assembled to celebrate the defeat of the application for the repeal of the Test Act ; suppose (for instance) the Church and King Club at Manchester, in their uniform drefs, assembled to celebrate their anniversary of the victory over the Dissenters ; if an irritated mob of the vanquished party should surround the tavern,  
and

and commit a variety of excesses, would Mr. Wells place the guilt at the door of this society? But the Dissenters (to their praise be it spoken) have conducted themselves in a more worthy manner. Have they attempted the least disturbance at Manchester, (where they are certainly very numerous) when their enemies were exulting in their own disgrace, and adding insult to injustice? Let me also ask, if a riot had been committed on the day when the African Merchants were commemorating, with inhuman conviviality, the loss of Mr. Wilberforce's motion for the abolition of the Slave Trade, would Mr. Wells have considered the keeping of this festival as the cause of the tumult, and "been led to make reflections on the impropriety of such meetings?"

From these questions, which perhaps may prove puzzling, I would turn to a consideration of the objection to the Revolution Societies, on the ground of the inflammable tendency of the sentiments they convey to the public. If, to support this charge, it be urged, that they drink certain toasts that breathe a spirit of liberty—it is granted:—their toasts are undoubtedly expressive of joy on the downfall of despotism, and of wishes to remove every species of oppression from the face of the earth. Delightful sentiments! in which all must cordially join, but those who think that crowns are the *property* of Kings, and that government was

instituted for the exclusive happiness of the governors, without any concern for the *servile* multitude. But, besides several toasts in favour of liberty, they drink others, descriptive of their regard for law, and their love of peace, and they never except the British Constitution. Thus they guard against all possible misconstruction of their intentions. Is this "*Spargere voces in vulgum ambiguas*," for the sake of disturbing the tranquility of the kingdom? No, Sir; I must repeat, that all unaffected fears on this head arise from a false notion, that the English government is but a copy of the old government of France. If universal and remediless oppression, such as until lately prevailed in France, now existed in England, it might indeed be suspected that a commemoration\* of the æra of French liberty would lead to the destruction of English despotism; and under such circumstances it would be happy if it were followed by so desirable an event. I must likewise repeat, that the charge of exciting the people to riot better belongs to some of the members of the established Church: "Church and King—Down with the Dissenters—May the coin of Birmingham become current through the kingdom—The Dissenters deserve all the treatment they have received

\* This word, by an error of the press, was printed in the Paper commencement.



—It is to be regretted that Dr. Priestley has escaped with his life." These are phrases which have been used by those who ought to have acted with more good sense and liberality. In such language there is no ambiguity, and its tendency is obvious.

Mr. Wells is so little disposed to allow any merit to the Members of these Societies, that he ungenerously attributes their peaceable behaviour at their meeting to policy, not inclination: "But may not this decorum," says he, "arise from the natural timidity with which novel systems are propagated, a diffidence in the state of the publick mind to embrace them?" &c. How would Mr. Wells like to be judged by others in this manner?

—Let me put the following case, for sake of example, without meaning to suggest the most distant suspicion of its truth. Suppose it should be said of Mr. Wells, that it is interest which makes him so devoted to the Church, and that, upon the same principle, he wishes to distinguish himself as a writer in defence of the Church and State; would Mr. Wells think that such an imputation, without the least proof, was justifiable? If his heart should tell him that such conduct would be unjust, he knows in what light his own unsupported attack ought to be regarded. I must own that this part of his

his letter has no less astonished me, than that in which he observes, that "had there been no attempts made at Birmingham to commemorate by the dispersion of a hand-bill," &c. Mr. Wells must either have been so extremely inattentive to the subject on which he writes, as not to know that the principal gentlemen of Birmingham, who attended the last meeting on the 14th of July, have in the fullest manner denied any knowledge of that execrable publication; or he must doubt the veracity of characters, whose integrity, even calumny itself has never dared to call in question.

But to advert to the National Assembly of France.—Mr. Wells, to prove that "the principles of that body have made the French empire a monument of human misery," ought, at least, to have shewn that, upon a comparative view, there was more happiness under the old than the new government; but he prudently desists from the attempt. If the King or Queen of France, or some of the nobility, may be *less* happy than before, does it follow that the country, upon the whole, is not *more*? When oppressive power is destroyed, the tyrants who possessed it must necessarily deplore the loss. The only difference between a prince who succeeds to arbitrary sway by descent, and him who *immediately* usurps it, is this; the former deserves compassion,

compassion, the latter indignation and punishment.

Again: Mr. Wells having charged the Societies for commemorating the French Revolution with disseminating republican principles, I remarked in my former letter that this could not be said, because the National Assembly had confirmed the Monarchy by an almost unanimous vote. Mr. Wells, by way of confutation, observes, that the Assembly was *compelled* to restore Monarchy to save its own *existence*. The existence of the National Assembly, Sir, solely depends upon the people, who gave it birth in opposition to the endeavours of strong parties, and have continued it in being, notwithstanding many conspiracies to overthrow it. This the National Assembly well knows; a constitution agreeable to the people has been the object of its labours, and its success was testified by every department of the kingdom, at the time of the Grand Federation. If then the National Assembly knows that its existence depends not upon the Monarch, but the general will from which it was derived, and that it is safe whilst it seeks and obtains the approbation of the nation, how was it compelled to acknowledge a King through the fear of its own destruction? It has appeared, that Monarchy was almost the universal wish of Frenchmen, and this

was



was the motive for confirming it. But Mr. Wells will, perhaps, contend thus:—The National Assembly was of opinion that if the Monarchy was not preserved, the King would join the body of fugitive Nobles in Germany, and repossess himself of his throne and former greatness, at the head of an Austrian army; that the Assembly feared it, and was therefore *compelled* to bear with a King whom they would gladly remove. I will, however, be bold to aver, that this could not be the motive for preserving the Monarchy. The members of the National Assembly could not be ignorant, that if it were consistent with good policy in Austria to make an attack upon France, to reinstate the Monarch in his ancient privileges, or replace him on his throne, would equally supply a ground or pretext for war; nor could they be ignorant that the whole power of the House of Austria, aided by six thousand French refugees, *could not* conquer nearly twenty-six millions of freemen, fighting *pro aris & focis*!

I now proceed, lastly, to examine Mr. Wells's doctrine of the Inherent Right of Kings.—“And I will aver too, and I am sanctioned in my opinion by the law of nations, that not only this or that Monarchy, but every Monarchy that has antiquity, and received custom for its establishment,  
“ provided

“ (provided there be no stretch or *violation* of the  
 “ prerogative alledged against the Monarch) is built  
 “ not on sand, but such a foundation that nothing  
 “ but the utmost state of mental depravity should  
 “ attempt to overthrow—depravity, Mr. Printer,  
 “ nothing short of that which instigates one man to  
 “ seize the property of another.”—This is the way  
 in which Mr. Wells would support his doctrine of  
 the inherent right of Kings. If Mr. Wells means to  
 say that none but kings of *ancient* monarchies have  
 this inherent right to their crown, let him recollect,  
 that these monarchies must once have been modern.  
 Let him also consider, how far his own reasoning  
 will carry him. If a Monarch be unwilling to re-  
 linquish the exercise of an ancient and customary  
 prerogative,—a prerogative which he has neither  
 abused, nor strained beyond its bounds, but which  
 is arbitrary, and never ought to have been vested in  
 him, what is to be done? This long-established  
 prerogative is his *property*, (upon the principle of  
 Mr. Wells) and ought not to be taken away. Thus  
 every despot, who can plead prescription, may  
 range uncontrouled through the circle of his ac-  
 customed tyranny. Would not the Sultan of Con-  
 stantinople think Mr. Wells a most excellent  
 Mussulman? But I would endeavour to foil Mr.  
 Wells with his own weapons; I would endeavour to

prove

prove, upon his own authority, that Government is a revocable trust. He admits that it would not "be a proof of mental depravity to attempt the overthrow even of an ancient Monarchy, where any stretch or *violation* of prerogative could be alledged against the Monarch." If the crown, then, may be taken away, on the failure of certain conditions in the possessor, what becomes of Mr. Wells's inherent right of Kings?

In addition to these remarks, I might contend, in opposition to Mr. Wells, that the government of the country cannot be twofold, ecclesiastical and civil, if the civil can of itself alter or new mould the former according to its will; and I might likewise offer some observations against the purity of the Church of England, which with this gentleman is synonymous with the Church of CHRIST—but I forbear—this letter is already extended to an unpardonable length. I will, however, promise you, Mr. Printer, that I have no intention to trespass upon your patience a third time.

PUBLICOLA.



TO THE PRINTER OF THE  
BATH CHRONICLE.

SEPT. 3d, 1791.

I SHALL take the liberty, for the last time, of trespassing on your paper, and making a few remarks in my turn on PUBLICOLA's last letter inserted the 25th ult. He begins with his usual candour in finding fault with the language, and as a proof of his right of doing it, uses the expressions of "abuse against" the Revolution Societies; "abuse against" the National Assembly. Exclusive of the injustice of such a remark on a writer who only expatiates on publick matters, open to every man's discussion in a free country,† I consider the word "against" as used after the word "abuse," as not strictly classical. Abuse *of* any system, or any set of men or measures, is the common mode of expression; abuse *against* participates of the nature of a redundancy,—for if it be *abuse*, it must be *against*. I do not mean that the expression obscures the meaning; all I infer is, that it gives me as fair an opportunity of criticising, as what he laid hold of: for, as "violation" signifies *abuse*, wherein can consist

† An inconsistent exception this to be made by a man who stands forth the advocate for the general liberties of mankind, and lays his chief stress on the matter of fact.

the glaring impropriety of the expression of a King's abusing the powers intrusted to him? However, I do not pretend to adopt studied language; all my endeavour is, to express principles, in my opinion, sound and honest, in a plain and intelligible style. But to the subject of this writer's letters: and first, his puzzling question; which I would resolve in few words, had I only the puzzling part to contend against. It is a delicate question, and as such I decline answering it; but, however, I beg leave to make this observation, that *local circumstances* might justify *proceedings*, which to us, at a *distance*, might appear *irregular*.

If, however, this Gentleman had candidly asked me my private opinion of any indifferent meeting established by one description of religious party against the other, without particularizing, I would as candidly have answered him, that I disapprove it, as neither promoting our *temporal* or *spiritual* interests; and as to the Birmingham currency, that I ever made a point of rejecting it. No less repugnant to the sentiments of my conscience, are such toasts as "Down with the Dissenters, &c." and the construction I ever placed on the words of my Heavenly Master's rebuke to his disciples, "Ye know not what manner of spirit ye are of;"—"the Son of Man is come not to destroy men's lives,

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but to save." But what has the introduction of "the Church and King Club at Manchester," or the meeting of "the African Merchants," to do with the subject of my letters, which were confined to the French Revolution, the seditious hand-bill of an unknown author, and certain political toasts, as constituting, in my opinion, "*voces ambiguas*?" My attachment to the Church of England is no fair proof of my being an enemy to those who differ from me in matters of conscience. Neither can my imputing the Birmingham riots to the true cause, the seditious hand-bill of an author not yet found out, subject me to the charge of accusing a particular sect of Christians with it.

This Gentleman is extremely angry with me for judging of the motives of men, from my interpretation of their publick sentiments, and has a very happy talent of allowing *himself* to do what he *refuses others*. But with all his craft and ingenuity, I will prove many of his arguments to be unsound.

To avoid taking up unnecessary room in your paper, Sir, I will select two. In a former letter he condemns the fears and alarms of the friends of our constitution, by observing, that those fears could not be well grounded, unless the British Constitution be supposed to partake of the errors of the old French. But to have established the truth of this observation,



observation, he should have shewn, that the English Constitution accorded with the principles of the *present new one* of France, the object of his admiration; otherwise these fears become established, not removed. It is an axiom in logick, not only to establish the truth of a proposition, but a *justness* of allusion to the case in point; otherwise if we draw conclusions, those conclusions will be wrong, and we become self-confuted. I will not follow up the argument with observing, that the love of novel systems may not improbably be attended with the wish of adopting, because he includes the English Constitution in his good wishes, and he shall therefore have the credit he deserves.

Again, in order to deprive my argument of its weight, as derived from the received doctrines of antiquity, custom, and prescription, he instances an half-civilized, and of course the most exceptionable empire he could think of,—and desires me to observe, that antiquity is nothing, because the empire that may now be considered as an ancient establishment, was at one period a modern one. Strange observation to proceed from so sagacious a writer! But may I not reply, and ask this gentleman, what has the argument of a system's being once modern to do with its present state of antiquity? Does it invalidate its present claim thereto?

Unless he is an advocate for the world's being without a beginning, (the ancient doctrine of some Pagan Philosophers) every mode of government must have been modern at first. However, if antiquity, custom, and prescription, are to be considered as matters of no moment, what would this writer be pleased to substitute for the loss of our old guides, to ascertain and preserve property? What would he leave to the learned Gentlemen of the profession of Law as an equivalent for the loss of their old friends, to whose assistance they are frequently obliged to recur in difficult cases respecting title and property, and lay it down as a maxim, that the older the title, the more permanent and difficult to be set aside? Surely this Gentleman will not pretend to confute me, by excepting one species of property from the established protection allowed to all. However, I never did, nor ever meant to condemn, the expunging despotism, and rejoiced as much as any man at the downfall of state prisons; all that I was against was, the subverting an old Monarchy, and attacking Regalright, when redress might have been had through the regular means, viz. the medium of the legal Representative Body of the kingdom, without the rash assumption of all power by the people, and sapping the foundations of all order and all government.

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The word "unwilling," I cannot think can be well applied to a Monarch, who has shewn himself tolerably pliant; and there is little doubt but he would have submitted to addressees and remonstrances, and have done every thing to have made his people happy, but sacrificing his own honour.

In short, the matter in dispute between *Publicola* and me is briefly this: he is for consulting the Governed more than the Governor; I am for the benefits and happiness of the one, without detracting from the weight and consequence of the other in the scale. He is for "crowns being no property;" and that the only difference between a King who inherits a despotick crown, ("succeeds to arbitrary sway by descent," to use his own words, or "usurps\* it,") is this, that the one deserves our pity, the other our resentment and punishment. And I am for every legal crown's being property, and entitled to the same protection as every other, "subject however to a compliance with the *original compact*."†  
—But if we can so easily get rid of the crown, without any fault in the legal Monarch but his inheriting a despotick crown, what becomes of another serious

\* The word *usurp*, which *PUBLICOLA* here uses, is foreign to the matter in question, and running from the argument, as we are disputing about the rights of an hereditary Monarch, not the unjust powers of an usurper.

† Mr. Burke.



matter, the oath of allegiance to that crown? Is this an act revocable at pleasure? This is a solemn question, and involves in it the most important consequences.

I would on this occasion, Mr. Printer, have paid the trifling tribute of approbation to the persecuted brethren of the other kingdom, who, through such conscience towards GOD, "endure shame, suffering wrongfully;" but their cause has been so ably pleaded by that brilliant ornament of the British Senate, that any thing I can say would appear but as the glimmering light of a taper against the all-powerful refulgence of the mid-day sun.

The situation to which this writer supposes my clause "provided," to have reduced me, is not so desperate as he may imagine, though a tolerable effort made to cast me. I am not singular in opinion, Mr. Printer, of right remaining, even when the power of exercising that right is taken away. A King, though not *de facto*, may remain a King *de jure*, without a solecism in language, or a confusion of ideas: And let this writer remember, that if we verily believe, and act up to our belief, political or religious, we shall not be condemned because *certain articles* of our faith may be erroneous. And let this writer remember, that if we believe verily in our creed (political or religious)

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we may be saved, without working such miracles as removing mountains, or converting infidels.

Where I have misunderstood this writer, I am ready to give up "the word." But, as I observed before, if my premises are right, (and he has not denied them) the conclusions make equally against the expression of detail, or in part. The Latin terms of "*pro aris & focis*," are more applicable to old and established rights of a people, such as they have experienced, and have been used to consider as such, than new doctrines just found out for them; and it is a trite observation, but not the less just, that too much liberty is often as subversive of our welfare and happiness, as too little.

As to the restoration of Monarchy, if he denies it to be an act of compulsion, surely he must allow it to be an act of restitution, and of course not deserving of the stress he lays on it: Where we have done an injury, and make restitution for it afterwards, it is certainly entitled to some merit, but not every.

One observation more, and I have done. "Suppose," says this Gentleman, "I should put the question to Mr. W. for the sake of *argument*, without believing one word of the *truth*, Was it interest that makes him so devoted to the Church?" This question gives me an opportunity he is not aware of,

of, or did not guard against, of making a fair conclusion in my own favour. *Publicola* acquits me of the personal motive, by disallowing (in which he is quite right) my having personal interest in the cause of vanity as a writer; by denying me the qualifications of one, of course he leaves me a clear title to a far better one, without which the brilliant display of language is nothing, and with it such as mine may carry some little force and conviction. However, be that as it may, I feel the truth of what I have advanced, and will live or die in the justice of my cause, and shall conclude with just observing, whether this writer's personal severity does not subject him to suspicions of the same "ebullition of impotent rage" he so expressly condemns in others, and of mistrusting the fair powers of his own argument.

I beg your pardon for this long letter; but having now placed my sentiments and principles in a plain and intelligible point of view, I take leave of the subject for ever.

R. W.





TO THE PRINTER OF THE  
BATH CHRONICLE.

AS I informed you in my last, that I had no intention of resuming my pen against Mr. Wells, it is necessary that I should explain to you the reasons which have produced a change in my determination. Had Mr. Wells confined himself to the support of his former positions, I should not have again troubled you; but I cannot refrain from defending my language against the imputation of being unclassical, and from extricating my meaning from the false sense which is put upon it either through misunderstanding or design.

Why has not Mr. Wells attempted to justify the expressions which I have selected from his letter as inaccurate? For a reason most obvious: because he knows they are not to be vindicated. Instead of clearing himself from the accusation, he therefore endeavours to recriminate. I must, however, think that he has failed in bringing home the proof. In the phrases, 'against the Revolution Societies,' 'against the National Assembly of France;' the term *against* is, he says, 'redundant;' 'for if it be

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abuse, it must be against.' Let me then propose to Mr. Wells the following question :

Suppose I had said ' to offer some comments upon the *invectives against* the Revolution Societies.' If it be an invective, it must be *against*; but is the term *against* therefore 'redundant?' Instead of abuse against, Mr. Wells would substitute abuse *of*. With submission, however, to him, I believe the former expression is equally good with the latter—a participle must be understood in both cases. If we say abuse *of* the Revolution Societies, &c. we understand spoken of or concerning; if we say abuse *against*, we understand thrown out against.

But to shew that my meaning has been misrepresented by Mr. Wells. If, Sir, you compare with my letter Mr. Wells's paragraph beginning thus—' the word unwilling,' &c. you will, I doubt not, be of opinion, that I am arguing on general principles, against a general position laid down by Mr. Wells,—and that the word *unwilling* is not applied by me to any Monarch in particular.—I make use of the most unrestricted assertion. ' If a Monarch be unwilling, &c. &c.'—When I wrote this passage, the French King was not in my thoughts.

The controversy between Mr. Wells and myself seems now to be terminated; let the publick judge  
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on which side the weight of argument lies; let them judge whether the reasoning of his last letter, as far as it is intelligible, be not obviously irrelevant or futile. I can only say that it thus strikes the mind of

PUBLICOLA.

SEPT. 12<sup>th</sup>, 1791.





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